

PROTECTING MT. VERNON.

The Mansion Fitted With Fire Extinguishing Apparatus.

Splendid Guard System Maintained Day and Night—Inflammable Structure Endangers the Relics—Four Big Chemical Engines Used.

Time and time again it has been proposed to place at Mt. Vernon all the Washington relics at the National Museum and in possession of persons willing to loan or donate them for that purpose. As often as this plan has been proposed the objection has been raised that the old mansion, which is such a fitting home for all memories of its distinguished occupant, being constructed of frame, which, in the course of years, becomes more inflammable, is thus too liable to fire to prove a safe place for housing articles which, once lost, could never be replaced. It has even been proposed to erect an iron fire-proof structure on the grounds at Mt. Vernon for the purpose of housing Washington relics, but no action has, thus far, been taken in the matter.

Notwithstanding the apparent peril of fire, the precautions taken at Mt. Vernon are so efficient as to almost preclude the possibility of the destructive element making its appearance. The plan for fighting fire, however, is not near the mansion and ready for use at a moment's notice, was planned by the late assistant chief of the Washington Fire Department, and is up to date in every respect. Upon the occasion of the installation of the plan, Mr. Low suggested a test of its efficiency. A frame structure, the wood-work of which was steeped in kerosene oil, was erected upon the lawn in the rear of the mansion and some several hundred yards distant. The structure was sixteen feet in length, ten feet in width, and twelve feet in height. It was soon ablaze, but in fifty-five seconds the fire was under control, and within two minutes was completely extinguished. Mr. Low, on witnessing this thoroughly satisfactory demonstration of the efficiency of the chemical engine and chemical, remarked that, properly utilized and manipulated, the plan was sufficient to extinguish all Washington fires.

A small iron trap-door in the lawn back of the mansion, and about fifty feet distant, conceals four one-hundred gallon chemical engines, or four times as many of these splendid fire-fighting machines as this city possesses. In the mansion are located six three-gallon cylinders filled with the liquid which, when thrown upon the fire, produces a carbonic acid gas and forms the deadliest foe to the devouring element yet discovered. In addition, there are bottles filled with the same fluid in nearly every room which can be instantly used by anyone discovering a blaze, and there is a huge water supply. There is a guard upon each floor who looks to see that no gentleman smokes on, or even near, the premises, and that no matches are used for any purpose. The building is heated indirectly by means of hot water, the plant being located several hundred feet distant in a fire-proof vault in the rear of the greenhouses. The heat pipes are carried underground to the cellar of the mansion, and the heat is supplied to the rooms by means of a system of indirect radiation. During the night the building is never lighted without a watchman, four men taking turns of two hours each, and registering their periodical presence at all main points by means of electric clocks. In short, the danger of fire at Mt. Vernon is now reduced to a minimum, and should a blaze occur, it would, in all probability, be noticed instantly. If, however, a minute's headway were gotten by the blaze, damage to greater or less extent would in all probability ensue, for the wood of the building is as dry as tinder.

It is not, perhaps, generally known that the key to the Washington vault, upon the interior of the last member of the family, was thrown into the Potomac, and now lies no one can tell where. This interesting fact is conveyed nowadays to the visitor with all due pathos and solemnity by one of the greatest curiosities at Mt. Vernon, one Thomas Bushrod, an old negro, whose duty it is to show the tomb, and formally introduce the visitor to "George Washington and Lady" Thomas. He recites a monologue, which he has evidently learned by heart, and into which he introduces the periodical presence of the key he delivers in a bass tremolo calculated to excite the deepest emotion in the hearer, the words being nearly as follows:

"Now, ladies and gentlemen, as I try to explain to you, no matter how Washington an' Lady rest in these sarcophagi, you see in front of you, and upon the lid and bottom thereof, but the other members of the family, the Parks and the Bushrods, have been buried at Mt. Vernon, and through which no one may enter any more, the key of which, on the burial of the last remaining member of the Washington family, was thrown into the river, not into the flat, but in the deeper channel, where it mounthens and dredges out, and whar it will remain forever no."

Thomas winds up his interesting dissertation with the expression "an dat's about size of the Washington vault," and, being evidently of a cheerful disposition, seems inclined to congratulate himself on disposing of the Father of His Country and his kin, in such a summary manner. "Thomas was asked casually if he ever saw George Washington, and being excited to an undue amount of levity at the idea, found it somewhat difficult to go through with his narrative with his accustomed pathos and dignity. He is, however, an agreeable man, his hair and beard being quite white. He is seated at old Pobleck Church, where Washington was wont to attend, and is remarkably proud of the way by means of which he has secured his position. "Thomas Bushrod," he said in the course of a brief review of his life for the edification of his visitors, "belong to 'Colonel Fitz Hugh Bushrod, the wah, an' dey to his son; now he belong to eberybody. An' if yo' was to come to Pobleck Church on Sunday ebery Sunday, yo' would see 'Ole Thomas Bushrod' 'fetting as sexton. He were dere last Sunday eveying, when de parson an' de clerk an' 'Ole Thomas Bushrod' were dere. An' now, ladies and gentlemen, hab I told yo' eberyting?" he says, turning to some new arrivals, who are naturally somewhat surprised at the query. "Why, den, I will, den I will, I will—'Ole Thomas Bushrod' will tell yo' eberyting he know," and the routine narrative is forthwith repeated.

Food of Prehistoric Man.
Paleontologists are many times tending to the conclusion that the prehistoric man, but, though it provides information that may be gathered from a consideration of the weapons and domestic implements, it remains for the microscope to throw a measure of light

SOME ARTISTIC BREAKS.

Monumental Curiosities Found Around the National Capital.

Headress of the Goddess of Liberty, Jackson's Aerobatic Horse—The Stricken Steed Ridden by General Winfield Scott—The Logan Reliefs.

The Goddess of Liberty, as she appears upon the top of the dome of the Capitol, is worthy of close inspection, and has a most interesting history. The most remarkable feature about the huge statue is the headress, which would bear the study of that portion of the feminine world interested in novel forms of hats. Jefferson Davis was in the habit of telling the story of the selection of the headress of the goddess. Mr. Davis was Secretary of War at the time that the statue was made, and, to aid in the execution of the work, he appointed Capt. M. C. Meigs superintendent of construction. Several of the most distinguished American sculptors were invited to accept orders, among them Hiram Powers, who submitted for the dome a colossal female figure, on the head of which was the Liberty cap. To this day Mr. Davis objects, because it was among the Romans the badge of an emancipated slave; and as the people of the United States (excepting the colored population of the time) were born freemen, he considered it inappropriate to Mr. Powers' design. He objected, and designed a head-dress of feathers for the figure, which was accepted, because feathers seemed to him, in view of the aboriginal inhabitants, appropriate to a statue of America, leaving the question of taste to the critics. Crawford received \$3,000 for the plaster model of the statue, now in the National Museum, and Clarke Mills received \$3,000 for the casting in bronze. The additional expense for labor and metal ran the entire expense up to \$23,762.

Another monumental vagary that appears as rather odd in the Washington "pictorial" is the bronze horse head on the image, in the same metal, of the redoubtable Gen. Winfield Scott.

The extraordinary attitude and attitude of the "Father of His Country" in front of the Capitol building have often been commented on. The proximity of a cab stand gives anything but a dignified significance to Washington's upraised arm and finger.

The attitude of Jackson's horse, as depicted in bronze in the center of Lafayette Square, rather suggests the favorite fable, rather suggests the fable, for the noble quadruped was a performing pony, and that, perhaps, mistaking the cannon fire at New Orleans for the circus orchestra, with its liberal accompaniment of big drum, it acted accordingly. The hero of that occasion himself appears to have caught something of the spectacular traits of his horse, as witness the flourish with which he has apparently taken his hat off, and the remarkable manner in which he keeps his seat, which would do honor to the professional rider of a "bucking" pony. The whole tableau must have considerably astonished any of Jackson's friends who may have been on the occasion represented, for "Old Hickory" was ordinarily very prosaic in his appearance and movements.

The political license indulged in by the reliefs on the dome of the Logan Monument has aroused as much controversy as to the propriety of depicting scenes in historical scenes in which they never took part. As the historical poem, novel, and play, however, are not, according to the precedents set by the best masters, obliged to follow fact, and their authors are allowed to handle historical characters and incidents to suit themselves, there is said to be no reason why the sculptor should not do likewise.

THE COBRA'S WRECK.
Pitiful Details of the Loss of the Track Boat Destroyer.

One of the most horrible and graphic descriptions of the wreck of the "Cobra" was made by a man who was on board. "We struck," he said, "at 7:20 yesterday morning. The sea was high, and there was a nasty cross sea. The ship began to roll very heavily in the mid-watch, about 4 o'clock, it was anything but a calm sea. I went on deck to see what was up. She continued to roll heavily, and then all of a sudden she struck the bottom, and the waves in a moment broke over her. There was a white and gray shock, every man came up on deck, and one-half of the men were in their berths at the time, and had no time to dress themselves. The sea began to roll over the forecastle, and the water came in. The vessel broke in two, fore and aft. "Somebody gave the order to clear the boats away, though who it was I do not know. 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